Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

homemakers' chat
FOR USE IN NON-COMMERCIAL BROADCASTS ONLY
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1.9
In3Hh

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ DEC 4 1942 ★
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Friday, October 16, 1942

SUBJECT: "LONGER LIFE FOR ELECTRIC CORDS." Information from home economists, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

When you're taking extra-good care of your electric appliances these days to make them last, don't forget electric cords. These "lifelines" of your appliances need good care too.

Copper and rubber, two materials in these cords, have gone off to war...for use on the battle front. So even though an electric cord seems a small thing, make it live long and work well for you. In this way you help save on materials needed for our success in the war.

The main thing to hold in mind about appliance cords is to be reasonably careful with them - no matter how sturdy they seem. This is advice from household equipment specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

First thing, they point out that handling a cord improperly or giving it hard use may do a lot of damage...may even shorten it's life.

Let's look back for a moment on just how we use an appliance cord. One of the things we always have to do is connect and disconnect it. And much of the wear on a cord comes when we do those very things.

When disconnecting a cord, for instance, never pull on the cord itself. If you do, one or more wires may be pulled loose in the cap that fits into the outlet, or the plug that attaches to the appliance. These loosened wires may cause a broken connection or a short circuit. So when you take the cord from the wall outlet always grasp the cap. And pull it straight from the outlet. Even if it's tight, don't twist or wiggle it. Keep pulling straight until the cap prongs come free.

Some appliance cords have switches on them. Some outlets are also controlled by a switch. In either case, make all connections and disconnections with the switch turned off. When you do this you save the metal prongs and outlets from sparking.

Sparking eventually wears away the metal - and metal is desperately needed in war production now. So if you have a switch control, be sure it's turned off when you connect and disconnect the appliance cord.

Many electric cords are used on flatirons. If you have to disconnect the cord frequently while ironing, make these disconnections from the wall outlet, not from the iron itself. When through ironing, disconnect at both outlet and iron.

Watch your electric cords for signs of wear. Repairing the first place that's frayed may save more trouble later on. If a cord is handled roughly or has hard use, it's covering can wear off. The inside insulation may wear off too, so that one or both wires are exposed. If these bare wires should touch one another while current was flowing there could be a short circuit. You might have a blown fuse....a cord burned in half....or even a fire.

Another thing, watch heated surfaces when you use an electric cord. Don't let the cord touch them. Heat can injure both covering and inside insulation. When a cord is permanently attached to a heating appliance, it needs particular care. So make sure the applicance is cool before you wrap the cord around it for storage.

Above all, don't let any electric cord get wet - unless, of course, it's a rubber covered type for use in wet places. If water soaks through the covering and inside insulation of a cord and reaches the wires, this can cause a short circuit. If you use rubber covered cords in wet places, look them over to see if water can seep in anywhere. The rubber may crack if it's defective or old.

If you put in extension cords in your home, it pays to locate them carefully.

The best way to run an extension cord from one place to another is to attach it to the baseboard with special fasteners. This way you keep it off the floor. If it has to cross a doorway, run it around the door casing - never across the opening.

There are good reasons for all this. Electric cords may be damaged if they're laid under rugs or strung aimlessly across the floor. People may step on them, or furniture and equipment run over them. Constant wear like this destroys the cord's covering and inside insulation - may cause a short circuit or even a fire. And another thing - if cords are left where people can trip on them, someone may get hurt.

How you store a cord when it's off duty is also important. First, always remove separate cords from appliances when through using them. This preserves tension in the plug clips...the clips that fit over the appliance prongs.

A good way to store a cord is to hang it over two or more large, round wooden pegs, or over two or more metal hooks. Two pegs or hooks are better than one - because the bend in the cord won't be so sharp. A sharp bend weakens the wire, may eventually cause it to break.

Electric cords may also be loosely coiled, and stored in a drawer where nothing sharp can do them harm. All cords need a clean, dry storage place. Rubber covered ones need a place that's also dark and cool. And no matter what type of cord, be sure it's free of kinks and knots before you put it away.

That's all I have for you today on electric cords. Here's hoping yours wear a long time. You can do a lot to make them last - and it's going to be harder and harder to get new ones in wartime.